UNITED
NATIONS

S

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/24434
13 August 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

# LETTER DATED 13 AUGUST 1992 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Due to the fact that I have not been asked to speak before the Security Council today with respect to the resolutions pertaining to the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, I am transmitting to you a copy of the speech I had prepared for delivery to the Security Council.

May I ask your kind assistance in circulating the attached speech as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Muhamed SACIRBEY
Ambassador and
Permanent Representative

Annex

Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, Distinguished Delegates:

Let me first most sincerely thank this distinguished body for providing me with the opportunity to speak on behalf of my country, even if some of you may be uncomfortable with what I may have to say.

I commend you for your courage and sense of fair play and your efforts to be balanced, while at the same time I may be critical of the inadequacy of the response. I truly know that many have laboured to produce a meaningful result. I believe that others have continually resisted doing the absolute minimum to respond to this human tragedy.

None the less, I thank all of you for your dedication of time and conscience.

What did Bosnia and Herzegovina used to be? It was a land of peaceful green hills and planted fields. Of towns and cities where Catholic and Serbian Churches, mosques and synagogues shared our skyline for centuries. A place of learning and art, libraries and skilled artisans.

It was also where I as a young boy learned how to read the Koran, received gifts from Santa Claus at Christmas, and painted eggs on Easter.

What is Bosnia and Herzegovina today? It is a land where the hills and villages resound with the echo of the aggressor's guns, where churches, mosques and synagogues are desecrated and graveyards are razed. Where parks and backyards once filled with carefree children and happy parents are now make-shift cemeteries. A place of torture and concentration camps, starving children and dismembered corpses. Young boys are castrated, girls raped and orphans murdered.

As horrifying as this suffering is, these are only symptoms of a disease called "ciscenje" - "ethnic cleansing".

The resolutions contemplated here are at best only an attempt to marginally deal with the symptoms of this illness, and only some of the symptoms. This body must ultimately and urgently treat this disease.

Regrettably, there has developed a wide gap between the words and the deeds of the international community.

"Ethnic cleansing" has been introduced to our land by the Belgrade regime. It has provided the financing, weapons, many troops and, most importantly, the inspiration and philosophy for "ethnic cleansing".

This has all been done in the name of a "Greater Serbia".

It represents a fascist philosophy designed to maintain the absolute power and privileges of the discredited political, bureaucratic and military leadership of Serbia.

On 12 May 1992, His Excellency, the Secretary-General, accurately described the situation. He reported to the Security Council:

> "All international observers agree that what is happening is a concerted effort by the Serbs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the acquiescence of, and at least some support from, the Yugoslav Army to create 'ethnically pure' regions in the context of negotiations on the 'cantonization' of the Republic in the European Community Conference on Bosnia-Herzegovina chaired by Ambassador Cutiliero. The techniques used are the seizure of territory by military force and intimidation of the non-Serb population ..."

Universally, the international community has identified the aggressor, has condemned in the strongest terms the crimes against humanity, and has been virtually impotent in providing creative leadership and actions to help solve the crisis.

One has to wonder why still today we fail to take necessary immediate action to stop "ethnic cleansing" as it has reached catastrophic epidemic proportions.

All steps so far have only addressed some of the symptoms. They are a mixture of stop-gap measures and discredited methods. We are concerned that some of those efforts have the same effect as the ancient practice of "bleeding". In effect, this "treatment" is serving to weaken the patient.

Our people are truly grateful for the relief efforts feeding and healing the people of Sarajevo, and for the brave, noble and selfless efforts of the men and women of UNPROFOR, the UNHCR, the Red Cross and other relief organizations.

Attempts at mediation and evenhandedness have caused reports to be issued equating the victim with the aggressor. Other credible reports of the magnitude of the suffering and the extent of the Serb fascists' atrocities have been totally omitted or misdirected in a futile attempt at evenhandedness and in pursuit of the failed avenue of mediation.

A misdirected former UNPROFOR commander in Sarajevo exhibited the extent to which victims have been vilified in this process by blaming the valiant bus driver and volunteers accompanying orphaned babies and toddlers from Sarajevo when Serbian extremist snipers murdered two of these young souls as they tried to escape.

Certainly, the epidemic afflicting our people since the first reports of Serbian extremist atrocities and "ethnic cleansing" campaigns has proven the futility of current mediation efforts. Even as the contemplated resolutions

are discussed, the proponents of a Greater Serbia are blackmailing the valiant relief workers in Bosnia and Herzegovina to become the tools for the "ethnic cleansing" of 28,000 non-Serbs; ironically, their only other choice is to send these unfortunate people to their graves.

Earlier this week The Associated Press quoted Jose Maria Mendiluce, special envoy in the region for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, as saying, "We cannot continue to be blackmailed and put in this dilemma everyday." He said, "We are not here to facilitate the criminal policy that is being followed in those areas, forcing people to leave houses through harassment and threats."

Obviously, these criminals continue to dictate the terms to the international community, rather than the other way around.

For how much longer?

We have continually asked for help to stop this aggression. We have asked for air action to help offset the overwhelming weapons superiority of the Belgrade regime and its surrogates, to knock out the heavy weapons besieging our cities, to interdict the resupply lines coming from Serbia and Montenegro, and to neutralize the Yugoslav Air Force attacking our population with cluster bombs and even napalm.

We do not ask for nor do we want foreign ground troops.

We will provide the ground forces to defend our country, to face the aggressor and even to escort relief.

We are even prevented from exercising our most basic right of self-defence. While the Belgrade regime and its surrogates continue to pour increasing numbers of more sophisticated weaponry into Bosnia and Herzegovina, we must defend ourselves with light weapons.

But truth may be our only weapon, and it is our greatest weapon.

The truth is, we have become the modern world's Warsaw Ghetto of 50 years ago, abandoned by many, deprived but together. We, the Muslims, Croatians, Serbs and Jews and others resisting a fascist philosophy of an ethnically cleansed, morally soiled Greater Serbia fear that these marginal steps are only designed to delay our imminent extinction as a country and as a people.

We see the world abandoning democracy, freedom, tolerance and coexistence while appeasing intolerance, aggression and terrorism by those clearly responsible for crimes against humanity.

Ethnic cleansing is not a diplomatic or political problem.

It is a human rights problem.

It is a crime against all of us.

It cannot be dealt with through negotiations.

In fact, to re-emphasize the Secretary-General's words of 12 May which point out the fallacy of past appeasement with the current most tragic results:

> "All international observers agree that what is happening is a concerted effort by the Serbs ... to create 'ethnically pure' regions ..."

Ethnic cleansing must not be excused, legitimized, appeased. It must be dealt with through the force of international law. And the victims must not be vilified or their plight sidestepped.

I believe you share with me the view that the victims of the aggression, the maimed, the concentration camp inmates and the murdered are not the culprits.

All victims whether from Serbia or Bosnia-Herzegovina share a very dismal future unless the more fortunate resolutely defend them against aggression.

While poor in means to defend ourselves, we are still wealthy in our courage and resolution to resist injustice and intolerance.

What does membership in the United Nations mean to Bosnia-Herzegovina today? As a Member, why doesn't collective security apply to us? As a member of CSCE, why don't the Helsinki Accords apply to us?

We have been placed on an equal footing with the very perpetrators of this great crime against humanity. The distinction between victim and aggressor has been blurred intentionally.

These questions are not only relevant to Bosnia-Herzegovina, but to all Members of the United Nations. The very credibility of this Organization rests on the successful handling of this crisis.

Our only weapon is the truth. And the truth shall set us free. That is our last best hope.

---